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INTERIOR-ENVIRONMENT APPROPRIATIONS BILL PASSES HOUSE

Legislation Includes Critical Funding for Preventing and Fighting Wildfires; Robust Funding Increase for IHS, BIA

Washington, DC {October 29, 2009}- Today, Rep. Herseth Sandlin joined a majority of her colleagues in the House of Representatives in voting for the conference report for the Interior and Environment Appropriations bill which funds programs administered by the Department of the Interior the Forest Service, and other agencies for the upcoming fiscal year. This legislation includes \$5.39 million requested by Rep. Herseth Sandlin for important priorities in South Dakota that help fight wild fires, conserve natural resources and wildlife habitat, and protect the environment.

"This legislation helps ensure the conservation of South Dakota's vast resources and diverse wildlife, ensuring our state's natural treasures can be enjoyed for generations to come," Rep. Herseth Sandlin said. "I'm happy that projects across South Dakota will receive funding through this legislation and am pleased to lend my support."

Funding requested by Rep. Herseth Sandlin includes:

- \$1.9 million to relocate the Northern Great Plains Dispatch Center, which will ensure that this facility continues to provide critical fire dispatch services;
- \$300,000 to install collector and interceptor wastewater sewers in Rapid City to ensure protection of the city's water supply from contamination caused by failing septic systems;
- \$1.69 million for the Forest Service to acquire 2,400 acres of the Lady C Ranch from willing sellers to preserve critical range habitat of wild elk, mule deer, white-tail deer, and other wildlife;
- \$1 million for the Dakota Tallgrass Prairie Easement Program, to purchase conservation easements that will protect some of the best waterfowl production areas in the

Dakotas;

- \$500,000 for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Prairie Management Program, which supports sustainable cattle production on the reservation and protects natural resources and endangered species.

Additionally, this bill includes \$3.5 billion for the Forest Service and Department of Interior to prevent and fight wildfires, including \$474 million for a reserve fund created by a provision attached to the bill - the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Flame Act, or FLAME Act- of which Rep. Herseth Sandlin is a cosponsor. This legislation improves the ability of federal agencies to prevent and fight catastrophic wildland fires, including fires that could occur in South Dakota.

Finally, under the agreement, programs administered by the Indian Health Service (IHS) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) will receive \$6.7 billion, a \$705.7 million increase over last year. The bill boosts funding for clinical services, domestic violence and substance abuse prevention initiatives, health facilities construction, tribal education programs, public safety and justice programs, as well as for law enforcement, detention center staffing, and tribal courts –acute needs in Indian Country in South Dakota.

The bill was passed by the House in June and the Senate in September, and differences in the two versions were worked out in a conference committee. Following House passage, it is anticipated that the Senate will agree to the conference report and send it to the President for his signature.

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